

REMARKS

With the cancellation herein without prejudice of claims 8, 15 to 17, 19, 21, and 24 to 26 and the addition of new claims 27 to 32, claims 9 to 14, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 27 to 32 are pending in the present application, since claims 1 to 7 were previously canceled. It is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 18 to 22 and 24 to 26 (of which claims 19, 21, and 24 to 26 have been canceled) are allowable. In this regard, the Examiner will note that each of claims 18 and 22 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the subject matter of its base claim and any intervening claim. The Examiner will further note that allowable claim 20 has been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 18. The Examiner will further note that each of claims 9 and 14 has been amended herein without prejudice so that claims 9 (which now corresponds to canceled claim 19), 11, 13, and 14 ultimately depend from claim 18. The Examiner will further note that each of claims 10, 12, and 23 has been amended herein without prejudice so that claims 10, 12 (which now corresponds to canceled claim 26), and 23 depend from claim 22. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 9 to 14, 18, 20, 22, and 23 are in condition for immediate allowance.

The remaining rejected claims have been canceled herein without prejudice, so as to obviate the remaining claim rejections.

New claims 27 to 32 have been added herein. Claims 27 to 32 do not add new matter and are supported by the application, including the specification, as originally filed. Claims 27 to 29 ultimately depend from claim 22 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 22. Claim 30 corresponds to canceled claim 25 (which was indicated to be allowable), depends from claim 22, and is therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 22 and 25. Claim 31 corresponds to canceled claim 21 (which was indicated to be allowable), depends from claim 18, and is therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 18 and 21. Claim 32 ultimately depends from claim 18 and is therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 18.

Accordingly, all of pending claims 9 to 14, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 27 to 32 are allowable.

Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the claims as previously presented in a continuation patent application. Further, any disclaimer that may

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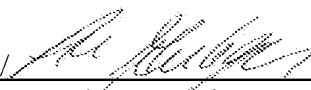
have occurred during the prosecution of this application is expressly rescinded as regards any subsequently filed patent application.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all of pending claims 9 to 14, 18, 20, 22, 23, and 27 to 32 are allowable. It is therefore respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present application are therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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